

CHAPTER
NINETEEN

image



FS'14

BRIAN K. VAUGHAN FIONA STAPLES

Saga

CHAPTER
NINETEEN

Saga

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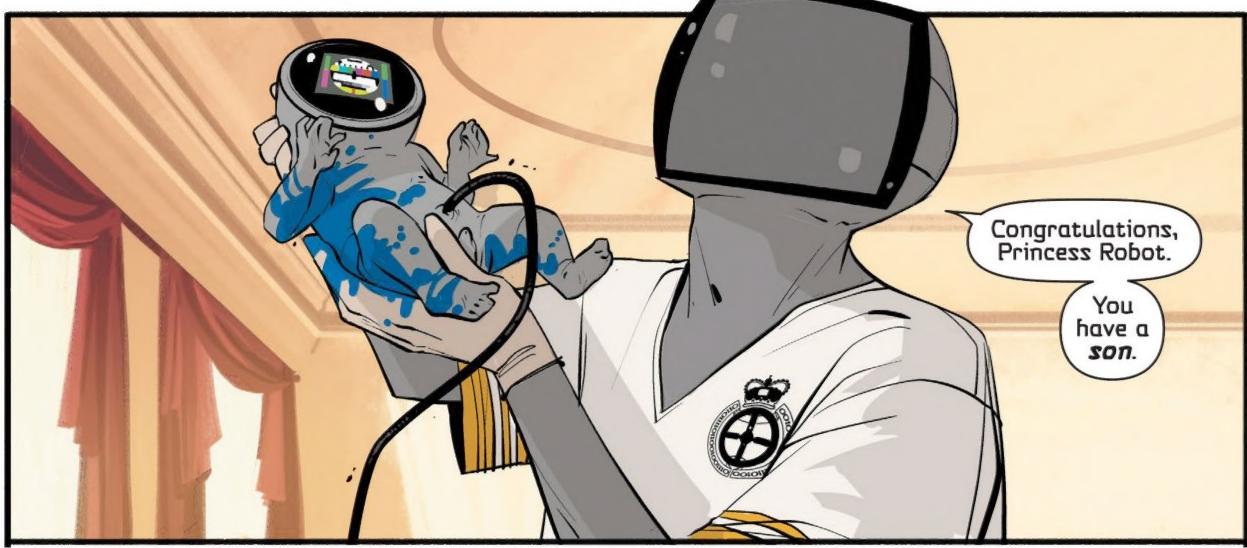
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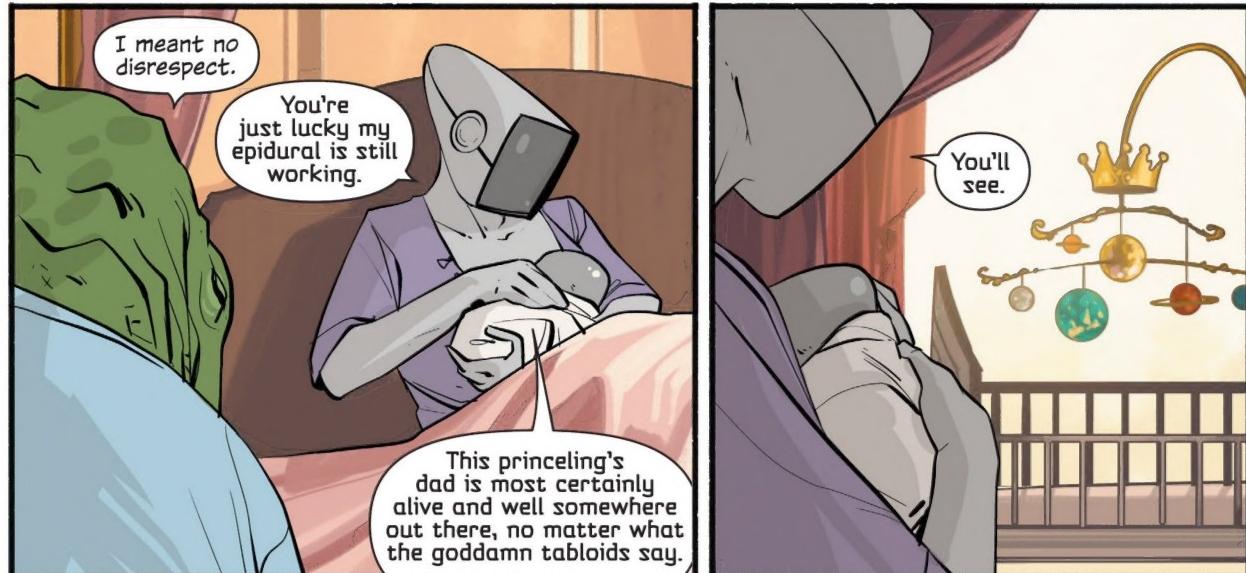
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*One last
push!*





The Robot Kingdom is a dwarf planet, which doesn't mean that dwarves live there (though maybe a few do, I don't know).



It just means the place is too big to be considered a moon and too small to be considered a real planet.

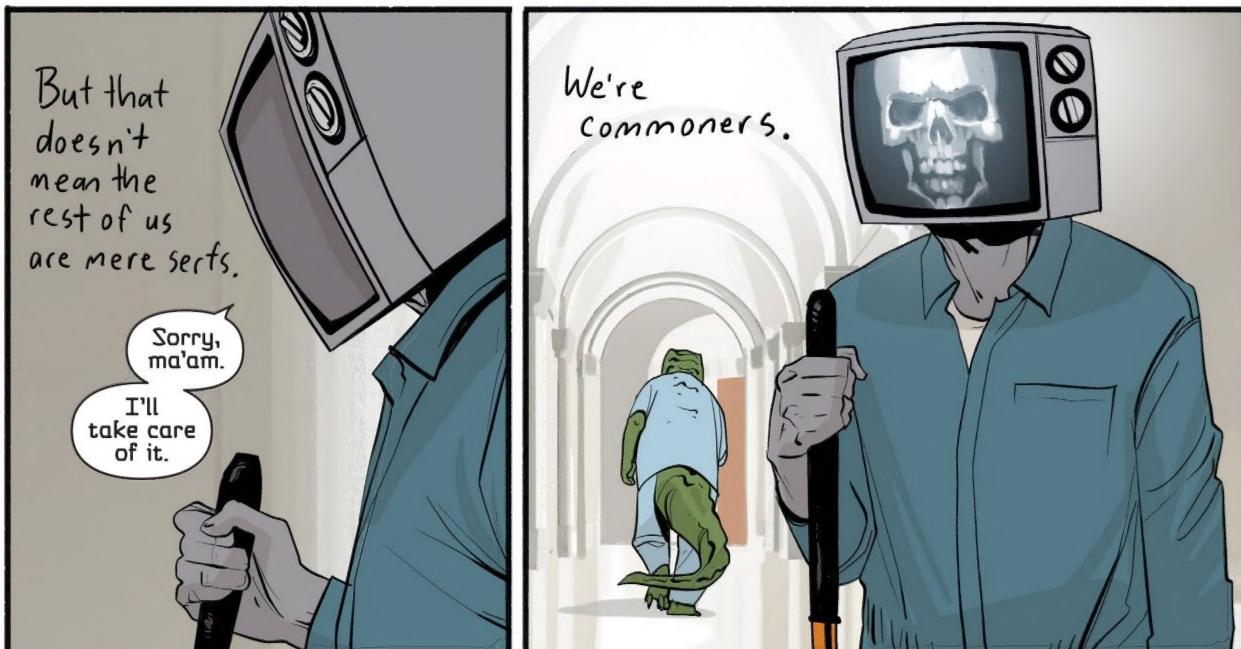


So like all middle children, the Kingdom picked sides carefully.



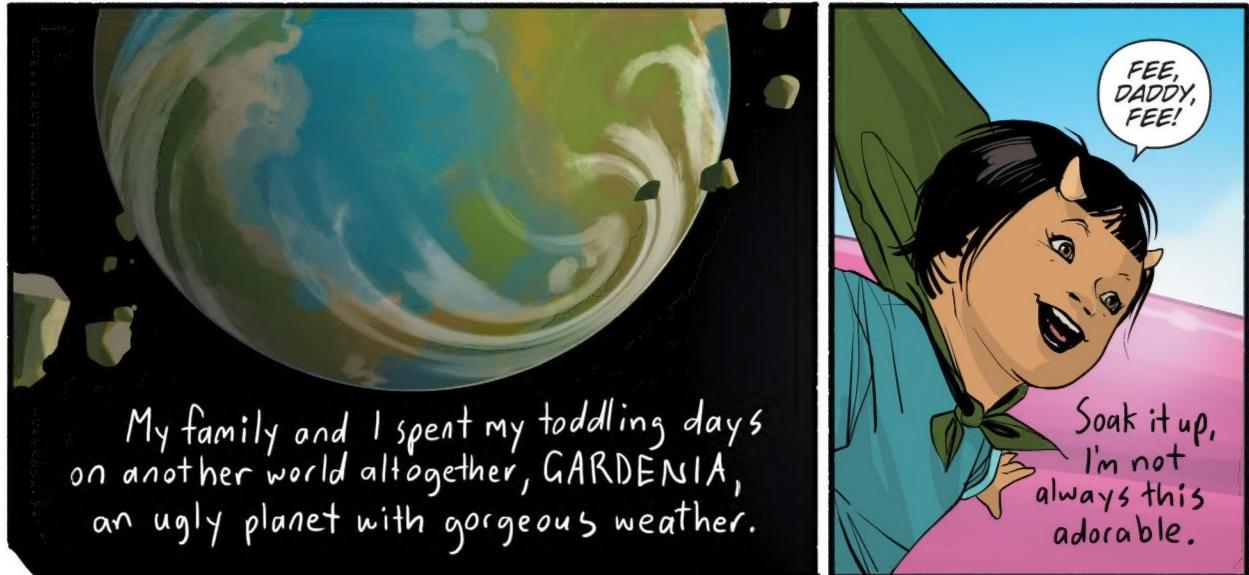
For their many contributions to the Coalition of Landfall over the years, the Robots prospered handsomely.





And our castles are made of air.

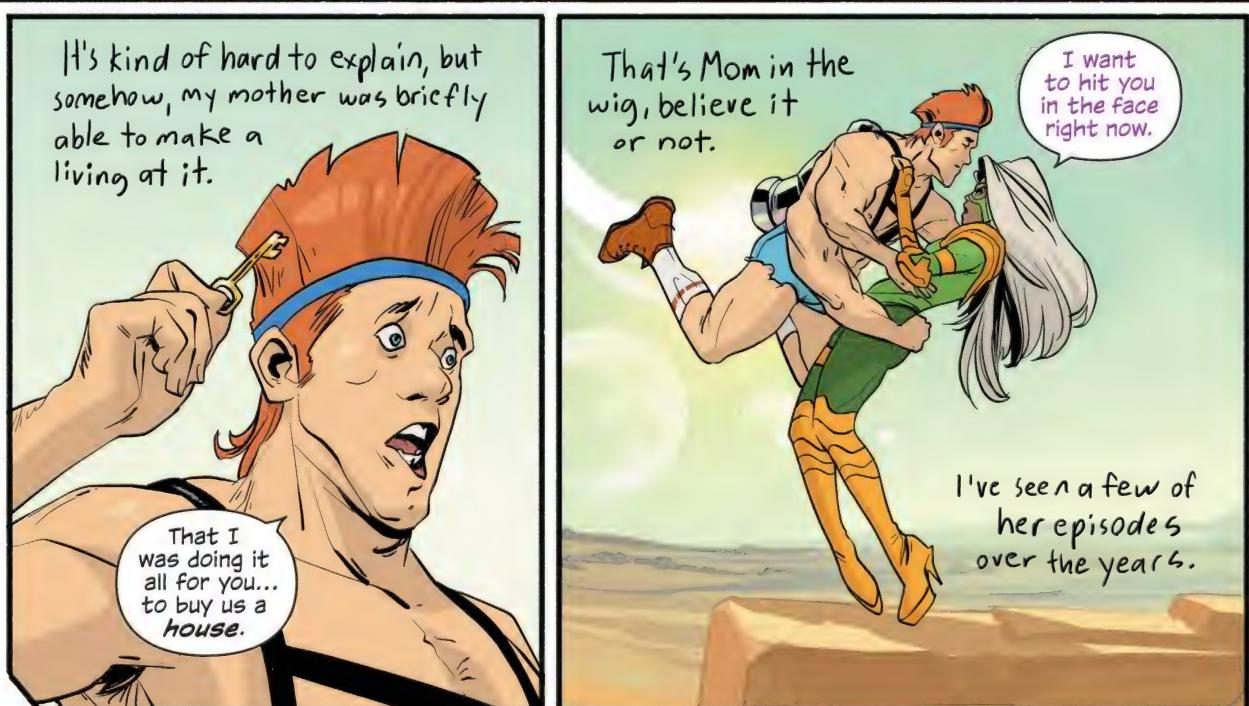














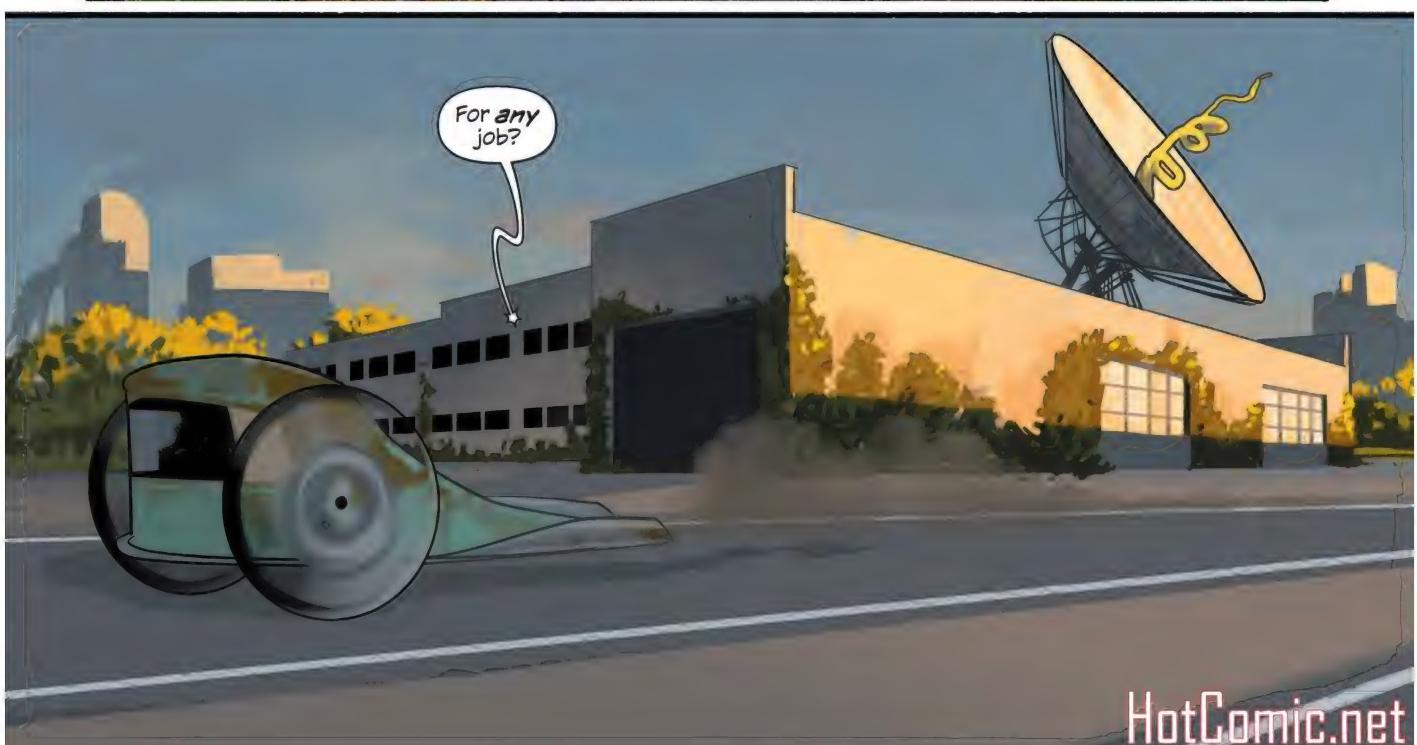
Some of the special effects are cool.



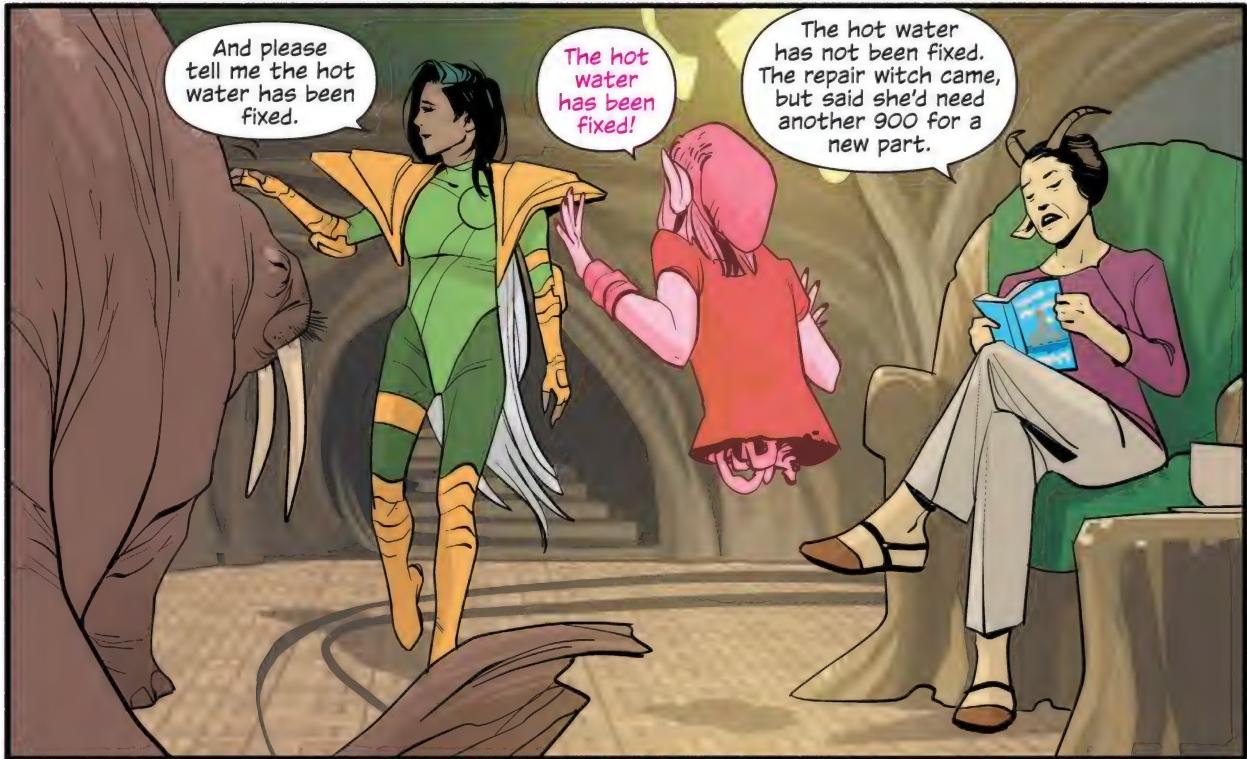
















This is the story of how my parents split up.



TO BE CONTINUED

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Before I forget, anyone else going to San Diego for Comic-Con this year? Fiona and I will both be there, so let's hang out.

I'm your letter column host Brian, back from a grueling Vactionanza. As I write this, *Saga Volume Three* is still a #1 New York Times Best Seller (at least on the list of "Paperback Graphic Books," further down the website page, Mom, keep scrolling...), so huge thanks to everyone who picked up a copy while we were away.

If you're just joining our ongoing series now because you're sick of waiting for the collections, you've fallen for our trap, you rube! Now you're stuck reading this poppycock, which is thankfully never reprinted anywhere else. We don't accept email because I am old, but you can send postcards/mash notes/homemade jerky (basically anything but story ideas, unpublished fiction, or stuff you want back) to anyone on the team at the address atop this very page.

Your messages don't have to be positive, nor do they have to have anything to do with this comic or its creators. My increasingly cat-like dog Hamburger K. Vaughan selects letters by a process only he understands, then forces me to respond...

Dear Brian & Fiona,

I seem to only read your books late at night and in times of deep emotional crisis (caused by your book). Please write me a note to bring to school to explain why I am about to do so badly on my costume history final.

Survive survive,
Matilda
NYC

We can do way better than a note, Matilda. How about an opportunity to actually earn money using your costume history education? Yep, it's time for our **Second Ever Ill-Advised**

Saga Costume Contest!

Our first one was pretty damn astounding, so I don't know why I ever referred to it as "ill-advised." Maybe because I was scared we'd just get a ton of readers attempting to cosplay the testicularly well-endowed Fard? Anyway, we didn't. But that is not an invitation! Or is it?

It is not.

Like last time, the rules are simple: use whatever materials you like to dress up as any character (or characters) featured in any moment of our series so far. Then, snap a good picture of yourself, and mail a physical copy of the photo to the address above. Or, by popular demand, you can now e-mail your digital pictures to a less radically Luddite member of the team at *SagaCostumeContest@gmail.com* (though please note that all other messages for *To Be Continued* still need to go through the regular mail, just because).

One grand-prize winner impartially selected by Hamburger will receive:

- FIVE HUNDRED U.S. DOLLARS
- Your picture published in glorious color in an upcoming issue
- A one-of-a-kind sketch of YOU as your *Saga* character drawn by the world-renowned Fiona Staples
- And an original script for a one-page comic story somehow inspired by the winner, crudely handwritten by yours truly

Burger also mailed out some cool crap to a bunch of our very deserving runners-up last year, and funny amateur entries were as popular as the professional-level ones, so whatever your skill level/shame tolerance, why not take a shot at letter-column superstardom?

Dear Brian and Fiona,

This will be our third hiatus. I dread these to the very maximum. After this past second hiatus, I decided to come up with a list of things to keep me busy during these *Saga*-deprived times. Here is what I will be doing for the next few months:

1. Watch every episode of *Alf* in order.
2. Read the wonderful, newly published by Image issues of Bob Fingerman's *Minimum Wage* (seriously, it's brilliant).
3. Find adorable comic-book-related outfits for my four-month-old son.
4. Start a new hobby. I'm thinking trains or something with tiny pieces and complex directions.
5. Eat more pizza, drink more coffee, and exercise less.
6. Continue to beg Brian K. Vaughan and Fiona Staples to attend Pittsburgh Comic Con so I can ask you so many questions that you'll tell me to stop.

So that's it. I do have one question. What is your favorite pizza? I'm seriously hungry and I need suggestions.

Please Hurry Back,
Daniel Bellay
Fairmont, WV

Thanks for your endless patience, Daniel. I also tried to stay busy during our last regularly scheduled hiatus. Best book I read was *Redeployment* by Phil Klay, which has one of my new favorite short stories of all time. Best movie was definitely *Under the Skin*, which we'll be discussing in the *Saga Film & Gir-tasting Club* that only exists in my head.

Too many great comics to mention, but standouts include *Alex + Ada* from Jonathan Luna, *Sara Vaughn* (no relation; also, misspelled), and our friends at Image. What a unique, tonally audacious, blockbuster of a book. I'm also loving *Caliban*, *Shaolin Cowboy*, a terrific comic travelogue I found called *Thoughts from Iceland*, and of course *Ms. Marvel*, featuring some of the most inventive artwork anywhere by Runaways co-creator Adrian Alphona. On the digital side, I've been enjoying *Pregnant Bitches of War*, a comic as audacious as

its title from my lifelong friend Clay Adams: www.friedcomics.com.

Wait, what was your question? What is my favorite pizza? Dan, it's taken ten years of living in California to uncover only a handful of truly acceptable pizza joints out here. Do you know how valuable that information is? It's the Glengarry leads. The NOC list. The... Kryptonian Codex. I can't just give away my favorite places to strangers, even ones with your excellent taste. But if any of my old friends from DC Comics are being forcibly relocated to Los Angeles, drop me a line.

Or did you just mean what is my favorite kind of pizza? Because a plain slice should be fine, thanks.

Dear Fiona & Brian,

Your stories have kept me enthralled over the years and Chapter 18 was no different. I embarked on a trek to the Everest Base Camp and knew insomnia is a serious problem at that altitude. So, I downloaded 17 and 18 to keep me company when the Sandman skipped my bed. Thank you.

Here's Lying Cat at 5,364m!

-Unsigned postcard from the Himalayas



Amazing. Not to be greedy, but now that *Saga* has made it to the top of the world, can we break atmo? Anyone have connections inside the space industry? Current or former astronauts/cosmonauts who happen to be into indie comics with alien nudity?

Dear Sir,

I believe it was an episode of *Amazing Stories* where the killer strangles himself. I seem to remember Christian Slater being involved. Hope this helps...

Sorry I didn't answer the reader survey as I accidentally set my hand on fire.

Darby

Tustin, CA

Darby is referring to a few issues back, when I asked if anyone else out there remembered a television episode (or perhaps an installment of a filmed horror anthology) from the 1980s or maybe early 90s about the world's most accomplished strangling hitman (?!), who ends the story by (spoiler alert for possible nonexistent tale) triumphantly choking himself to death with his own hands.

To date, Darby is the only weirdo out there who seems to know what the hell I'm talking about. And here's the thing, I ALSO vaguely remember the strangler being played by Christian Slater... but according to IMDB, he was never even

in an episode of *Amazing Stories*. Mr. Slater did appear in the tv series *Tales from the Darkside* as a kid and *Tales from the Darkside: The Movie* as a young man, but I can't find any information suggesting he played a strangler in either.

Am I just the world's worst researcher, or did this program perhaps originate in some parallel universe that only my fellow weirdo Darby and I were somehow able to access—if only briefly—through our primitive cable boxes? Will someone out there please help solve this mystery and/or have me involuntarily committed?

Hello Mr. Vaughan

Finally got the right pronunciation of your name from a YouTube video of you doing a chat with fans at a bookstore. I always pronounced it Vaw-Gun! That said, good luck with pronouncing my name.

I wish I could say I've followed your past works but sadly I can't. I've only read one issue of *Runaways*, two issues of *Ex Machina* and almost all of *Y: The Last Man* (Hey, it's not all sad). Comic titles that are not in "the big two" are hard to come by here in Nigeria. But, from the comic books I've read by you, I must say you're one of my favorite writers.

I've read the first twelve issues of *Saga* courtesy a friend of mine, Kingsey, who lives in the states and thought it would be something I would be interested in. He thought right. Apart from the story, I love the fact that I can actually say, "Your argument is invalid" to my fellow comic fans who think comics written or drawn by girls are for girls. Thank you, Fiona Staples (and also you Sara Pichelli—hope it's all right to include her here).

I really like the character The Stalk. Any chance we'll see a series with her and The Will? A prequel to *Saga*? I attached a drawing I made of an homage to one of Fiona's covers staring characters from my webcomic "crashercomics," hope you like it.

Thanks for the awesome read,

Kayode R. Orumole

Lagos, Nigeria

Thank you so much, Kayode. Yeah, regardless of your chromosomal makeup, everyone loves the lavish artwork and flawless storytelling of Fiona Staples.

And no plans for a prequel starring the presently vegetative The Will, though another reader anticipated how we might revisit the military hospital where he's recovering...

Dear Saga,

I'm so excited for the "very different direction" of *Saga* Volume Four. Based on Chapter Eighteen, I can only assume we'll see the wacky adventures of the 6654th M*A*S*H. Hawkeye will have actual hawk wings. The Will will dress in women's clothing until they let him leave. Radar will have a radar dish for a head. The tone will shift from silly to somber. A very special issue will end with news of Marko and Alana's rocketship tree: "It spun in. There were no survivors." As they read the final chapter, everyone in America will flush a toilet at the same time.

Love,

Vida Van Daugh

You are my least favorite letter writer, Vida.

(For new readers of *To Be Continued*, Vida and I used to

live together. It ended badly.)

Dear Brian & Fiona,

Like a lot of your readers who write in, I've been meaning to send you guys a letter for a while.

Our first time seeing *Saga* was after Vol. 1 came out and the cover was almost a mirror image of us. A couple with a little baby on a boob. I enthusiastically took the book off the rack and it took about 5 seconds into the first few panels to be convinced I had to buy it. Our baby was born at home so I related immensely.

I've been keeping up with the single issues ever since, and all I can say is our lives are better with *Saga*. We just had our second child in September, and upon learning she was female, the name Hazel was obvious. I wish I was the first to write in with news of actually naming their child after one of your characters, but I did deliver her myself at home, so at least I have that going.

Now, onto the compliments. I'm elated with how you write, Brian, and how you illustrate, Fiona. You guys are doing some fantastic work representing minorities in a refreshingly visceral way without making it seem forced or disingenuous.

I'm an illustrator as well and *Saga* has given me a lot of motivation to pursue finishing a comic I started years ago. Maybe one day I'll pitch it to Image. For now I hope you guys enjoy the recycled skateboard keychains I've enclosed from my budding project "Flipwood."

Some time ago I was in Burlington, VT having lunch with my family and another young family from out of town sat at a table next to us, and after complimenting each others' baby carriers, they congratulated us on the new baby and I can't remember if they asked what her name was, but I ended up going, "Yeah, we were inspired to name her by this comic" and the guy lights up and says, "Saga!!!" Omg omg, so yeah we had a little geek-out over that and I remember leaving there feeling awesome about that little connection. If this gets published and you guys are reading, Hi!

Anyways, thanks for a great time with this comic. I love it and always look forward to reading it and the To Be Continued column.

Orbes

Roxbury, VT

Wow, thank you for a) the keychains and b) naming your flesh and blood after one of our make-believe characters. The whole team is really flattered by the number of babies we've allegedly helped name. Parents of Hazels, as thanks, if your daughter is ever imprisoned for any reason in the future, and she can prove she was named after the narrator of this comic, I hereby promise in writing that I will personally cover her bail, regardless of cost, as long as I'm alive.

Saga Family,

First, I want to say that I am going to be that fan that gushes over how awesome this series is. The writing is phenomenal and the artwork is truly amazing. There is not one thing that I don't love about this series, and I am constantly trying to get others to read the amazingness that is *Saga*.

My husband and I have been hooked on the series since reading those first few words, "Am I shitting? It feels like I'm shitting." We knew that this was going to be one hell of a

series.

We will be expecting our first child in March, a girl! While we were discussing names, I tossed out the idea of Hazel, influenced by your book. Once it was said, my husband and I knew that it was going to be a perfect fit. Not only were we in love with the name, but we think it's going to be a great story for our Hazel to tell others how she got her name. I mean how many people get to say they are named after a character from a story with that stellar opening line? Not many, we think.

Thanks for the story, the name, and the entertainment. We look forward to devouring each book!

Happy Writing!

Sarah (and Joe Vassalotti)

New Market, MD

Okay, good news/bad news, Sarah. Your daughter's name may not be quite as rare as you first thought, but on the plus side, if she's ever convicted of arson, a frail writer will soon be there to purchase her freedom. Sincere congrats to you and Joel!

Dear Mr. Vaughan,

Long time listener, first time caller. I've been a big fan of your work for years, we promote your comics harder than most stuff in my comic shop, OK Comics in Leeds, England.

I was absolutely disgusted when I heard that *The Private Eye* was only going to be available digitally; and angry that I, and retailers like me, were being sidestepped. Months later: It's the first comic I've read digitally, and I love it. Five issues in, I now see the relevance of putting it online. But was I wrong to be so troubled?

The main reason I was so initially upset about not being able to stock *The Private Eye* was not because of lost revenue, but because we can't promote it as well as a print comic series. Can you help?

From what I glean from your letters page, it appears to be going down quite well. It's popular and finding new readers as it goes. But, I speak to customers every day, especially when a new issue of *Saga* comes out, who don't read *The Private Eye* and aren't even aware of it. What can we do?

Could you guys produce an image or mini poster that can be printed and displayed in-store, next to *Saga*, *Y*, *Ex Machina*, *Escapists*, to draw attention to *The Private Eye*, advertising it to people who only read print comics. Heck, you could even personalize it for any shop that wants to do this! "OK Comics supports *The Private Eye*, and this is where you find it..." or something.

It'd be great to know what you think of this. While *The Private Eye* is not available in my shop, you still have my full support.

Cheers,

Jared Myland

OK Comics

Leeds, UK

www.okcomics.co.uk

You are my new best friend, Jared. Thanks for your understanding and your world-class retailing skills. We hadn't considered doing analog posters for our digital-only sci-fi detective series (*The Private Eye* #6 now available for any price you think is fair at PanelSyndicate.com), but I love

the idea, and co-creator Marcos Martin has finally started offering some beautiful physical prints for sale through the site, so maybe we can make this happen. Stay tuned.

Dear Saga Team,

My name is Sadie and I'm a 16-year-old fan of the comic. My uncle was the editor of *Y: The Last Man*. He got me into it when I was about 15 years old. Steve also said that you were a joy to work with.

1) Do you know how many years the *Saga* series will go on? My dad says it will go on for at least 17 years, but I am not certain. I mean, I know it will go on for quite a while like *Y: The Last Man*, but approximately how long?

2) Out of all the characters so far who's your favorite besides *The Stalk* and *Lying Cat* (those are my dad's favorites).

3) Why did you decide to get rid of some really damn cool characters such as *The Stalk*, *The Will*, *Barr*, *D. Oswald Heist*? Those were kick-ass people/aliens, man!

4) How long will it be until the royal TV head baby is born, and how old is Hazel now approximately?

Included with this letter is a photo of me in my *Lying Cat* t-shirt. Talk to it.

Sincerely,

Sadie-Rain Mormon-Horn
Highland, NY

Hey, Sadie! Please send my best to Bunche, an early and much-loved editor of *Y: The Last Man*. Great questions.

1) Fiona and I have never stated exactly how long Hazel's story will last, but I really like your dad's suggestion of 17 years.

2) Klara is the easiest to write, for whatever that's worth.

3) Sorry about that. This series deals with life during wartime, so senseless deaths of undeserving characters will be unfortunately common.

4) How about Page One of this very issue for fast service? And time works a little differently in the *Saga* universe, but Hazel is roughly 19 of our Earth months old as of this issue.

Dear Brian,

I have two questions for you:

1) Do you ever get asked if you are walking the wife's dog when you are walking Hamburger?

As a man with a small dog, I've gotten all sorts of funny looks and have been asked that question way too many times. I got Snappy the Jack Russell 12 years ago, and she has been

a good, if not ridiculous friend for all of these years. I did not always have a fondness for small dogs, but Snappy worked herself into my family and now life will be hard without her.

Earlier this year the vets told us that Snappy developed a tumor on her thyroid. We don't know when, but the tumor will eventually kill her. It's been a sad, sad realization, but my family is determined to make her last years (or months) as happy and comfortable as we can.

I noticed from the letter columns that Hamburger also had some health problems. So, I've come not only to sympathize with the themes of *Saga*, but those of these letter columns too.

So this brings me to my next question, which I wanted to ask while you had a break:

2) I think every family needs a pet. Are you considering giving Hazel and co. one? And if so, are you entertaining the notion of some sort of small dog?

Thank you for writing and please keep it up. Every issue of *Saga* is such a wonderful story and I hope to be reading it for years to come.

Sincerely,

Andrew I.
Richardson, TX

1) Hamburger takes some offense at this question. Would anyone have asked John Wayne if he was walking his wife's dog? How about Marlon Brando? Or possible one-time TV strangler Christian Slater? All of those "manly" men used to own dachshunds, who obviously make ideal companions for humans of all sexual identities and gender options.

2) Your wish is sort of our command.

And we're very sorry to read about your Jack Russell, Andrew. Hamburger wishes Snappy a peaceful rest of her days, and he awkwardly attempts to console Snappy's guardian by naming YOU winner of this month's largely worthless whatnots from the Almighty Prize Drawer: a signed issue of *Saga*, one losing ticket for a horse named "Gisele at Fonz's" to win Race #5 (it was Take Your Kids to the Track Because You're a Questionable Parent Day), and a small picture of Bert's bottle cap collection from *Sesame Street*. Stay strong.

Great to be back. We return at ramming speed in one short month with Fiona's new best cover yet, as something terrible happens.

Happy birthday,
Brian

Saga
CHAPTER TWENTY

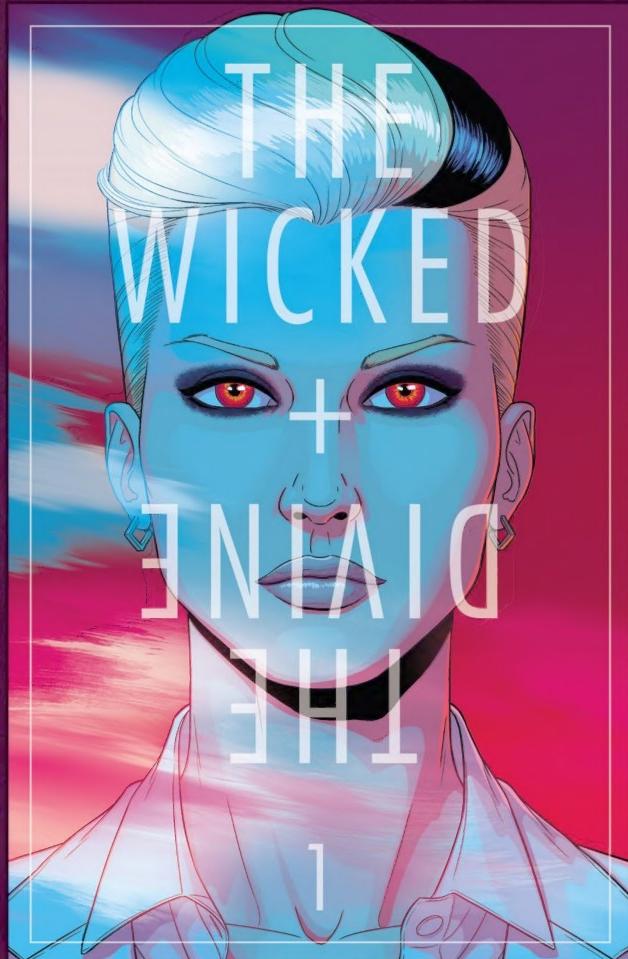
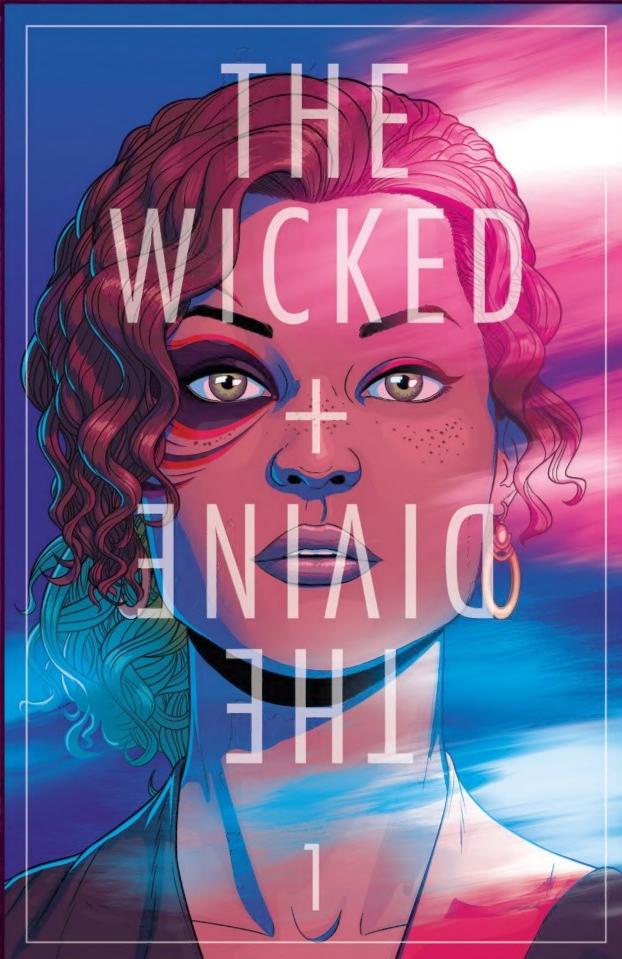
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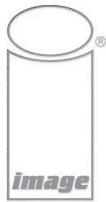
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